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Library Publishing Services: Strategies for Success

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Abstract:

In 2007, 65% of ARL members were reported to be either offering or developing publishing services (Hahn, 2008). A new survey, conducted by Purdue University, Georgia Tech, and University of Utah Libraries as part of an IMLS-funded research project, suggests that almost 80% of ARL members are now offering publishing services and that this is also an active area of interest in Oberlin Group (liberal arts college) and medium-sized institutions. It also provides a richer picture of an increasingly mature area of academic library service provision, well aligned with issues of emerging roles and new models of scholarly communication. This session reports on this important year-long research project surveying the state of "library publishing services" in 2011 and examines the challenges and opportunities library publishers face in the areas of technological infrastructure, skills and processes, and organization and sustainability. Attendees can expect to: learn about the opportunities of becoming involved in providing publishing services from within the library; get practical tips on growing existing programs from librarians active in this space; and receive some honest assessments of the challenges institutions involved in this area of new entrepreneurship have faced and how they have overcome them.

Through research conducted between October 2010 and end of September 2011, the "Library Publishing Services: Strategies for Success" project aimed to advance the professionalism of library-based publishing by identifying successful library publishing strategies and services, highlighting best practices, and recommending priorities for building capacity. Supported by a Collaborative Planning Grant from IMLS, with additional support from Berkeley Electronic Press, Microsoft Research, and SPARC, the project involved researchers from Purdue University, Georgia Institute of Technology, and the J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah, as well as consultants October Ivins and Raym Crow.ⁱ

To accomplish the project goals, the researchers employed four strategies: A survey of 223 library deans and directors (from the Association of Research Libraries [ARL], the Oberlin Group, and University Libraries Group [ULG]); three sustainability case studies of publishing programs at Purdue (e-journals), Georgia Tech (conference proceedings), Utah (monographs); three consultative/community-building workshops at Georgia Tech (May 4-6), Utah (May 11-13) and Purdue (May 18-20, 2011); and a review of existing literature.ⁱⁱ

From the survey, a broad picture of the state of library publishing services in North America in late

2010, the date of the survey, emerged. Approximately half (55%) of all respondents to the survey indicated having or developing library publishing services. Interest in such services varied by institution size, with over three-quarters of ARLs being interested, compared to 30% of Oberlin Group institutions. Most libraries with existing programs anticipated increasing the program's scale or scope in the next year.

About three-quarters of the programs published between one and six journals, the majority of which were only distributed electronically and were less than three years old. About half of the programs published conference proceedings, technical reports, or monographs; most were published electronically, but with some print-on-demand distribution.

As well as providing an interesting snapshot of current practice, the survey provided some longitudinal information since many of the questions followed those in Karla Hahn's earlier study of research library publishing services.ⁱⁱⁱ With a broadly comparable response rate from ARL institutions in her 2007 survey, Hahn found that 65% had either implemented or planned to implement library publishing services, compared to almost 80% in late 2010.

To structure the workshops and the presentation of results, the researchers divided the topic in five main domains; technological Infrastructure, policies and processes, skills and training, sustainability best practices, and organization and collaboration. These are used below to highlight some of the examples of best practice discovered and ground the recommendations of the project in the day-to-day realities that library-based publishers face. A complete presentation of recommendations and the various activities that made up the project can be found online at <http://wp.sparc.arl.org/lps>.

Technological Infrastructure

From the survey it was learned that the ARL, ULG, and Oberlin institutions published 211 journals, 207 monographs or technical reports, and 67 conference proceedings within the past five years. Most of these were electronic publications.

While some libraries continue to support electronic publications built on repository software such as DSpace and CONTENTdm or blogging solutions such as WordPress, the need for dedicated workflow tools to support the manuscript management process has made the products of the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) and Berkeley Electronic Press (BePress) the most commonly used publishing systems in libraries.

While at the University of British Columbia, John Willinsky's research in education and publishing led to the founding of the Public Knowledge Project in 1998. From that start the Open Journal System and Open Conference System were developed.^{iv} Both are open-source software requiring local installation, hosting, and maintenance. An example is one of GA Tech's SMARTech conference proceedings, the Southeastern Analysis Meeting. SMARTech conference proceedings was one of the case studies included in this study.^v PKP is in the process of developing an open monograph system and also Lemon8-XML, a web-based application designed to convert scholarly papers from word-processor editing formats into XML-based publishing layout formats.

The Berkeley Electronic Press (BePress) was established in 1999 by Robert Cooter and Aaron Edlin in response to the journal, *The International Review of Law and Economics*, being acquired by a major pub-

lisher and the subscription price raised by 400%. Digital Commons was developed to facilitate libraries hosting their own journals.^{vi} To date there are about 400 journals on this platform with about 150 being peer-reviewed journals. Digital Commons is a proprietary hosted platform, maintained centrally. The survey revealed that about 25% of the respondents were using Digital Commons. This enables libraries to shift the required support for the necessary software and hardware to an external entity, thereby freeing library personnel to work on other tasks. An example would be the Purdue e-Pubs Journal Publishing Services journal, *Journal of Aviation Technology and Engineering*.^{vii}

Workshop participants and the survey revealed a number of features lacking from the software being used. Suggestions for improvement focused on the need for increased flexibility/customization; more robust support for e-commerce/subscription models; the ability to link documents to data and other supplemental materials; the option to publish monographs and multiple journals on the same platform; richer analytics; and decent support for peer review workflows.

There was strong interest in the potential for sharing resources and development expertise to create shared technology platforms. Canada has, to a certain extent, led the way in showing the benefits of collaboration to develop publishing solutions with the success of Synergies. It is a not-for-profit platform for the publication and the dissemination of research results in social sciences and humanities published in Canada. Workshop participants suggested that institutions in the U.S. need to follow Canada's lead and also develop platforms for the sciences.

Specific technology recommendations resulting from the survey and workshops include: the development of more robust measures of the impact and outcomes of library publishing services and the development of centrally hosted options for open source publishing software.

Skills and Training

Three of the research project's data sources (the survey, workshops, and literature search) elicited information about the skills and training required to build and maintain a successful library publishing program.

The survey listed potential skills needed for employees working in library publishing services and asked respondents to indicate the most essential; the workshops provided panels dedicated to both skills and training; and the literature search uncovered around fifteen relevant bibliographic references.

Based on the survey, the top three skills required for library publishing include copyright knowledge, computer programming, and negotiation skills. Respondents also mentioned project management, knowledge of the publishing industry, and marketing as essential skills. Workshop speakers and attendees echoed these aspects while also expressing a somewhat sober realization of the range of skills demanded as a publishing program matures. Participants focused on the gap between the skill sets required by library publishers and the education offered by library schools and traditional publishing training opportunities. Most participants felt that library publishing had developed in a digital environment which emphasizes lightweight workflows and minimal editorial intervention. Traditional training still focuses on print-based production, copyediting, and design, whereas library publishers need skills in project management and XML workflows.

Discussion at the workshops centered on the possibilities of retraining existing staff rather than recruiting new staff from outside the library due to this gap, but also saw exciting possibilities in a potential MLS or equivalent that offered specialization in both librarianship and publishing. To address the immediate need for bridging the skill gap, speakers shared a range of documents and models and the group talked about how to share sample agreements, checklists, and workflow materials between programs, building on the tradition of information exchange within the library community. These documents reflected general processes that mature library publishing programs follow for setup, submission, and content review including memoranda of understanding about service, branding, and terms for intellectual property rights. Documenting these require discipline but little technology: Staff at California Digital Library's UC Publishing Services division use MS Word to record these processes and share them internally while University of Michigan's MPublishing program uses wiki software.

Pacific University library plans to create a two-week intensive course on scholarly journal publishing for undergraduates. It complements an existing course for literary magazine publishing and will introduce students to scholarly publishing as a career and develop a feeder for student involvement in student-led journals and other scholarly publications on campus. A brief outline of the course content includes layout/design, copyediting, technical support, and reviewing as appropriate for student journals. University of Calgary library administrators created a formal scholarly communications office to bring together existing staff into new roles and considered technical skills, marketing skills, metadata, harvesting, copy editing, and layout as core elements for staff to maintain. The new team initially relied on webinars as a source of training as more robust in-house training developed.

Under the category "formalize skills and training," the research report recommends the creation of formal and informal venues to provide training and community-building resources, including virtual online conferences and seminars. (An example was a THATcamp Publishing event held in Baltimore, MD, on October 30, 2011.) It also challenges library publishing programs to articulate the particular value they deliver and position such programs as relevant to authors/editors, university administrators, funders, and others. Finally, the report recommends the establishment of dedicated library publishing positions to provide champions for publishing programs that are often the responsibility of position portions so as to improve program continuity and success.

Policies and Processes

As libraries explore and incorporate library-based publishing into their core set of services, issues of scale and scope often require a closer look at the policies and processes that define them. With regard to this project, policies and processes represent both internally-focused practices (e.g., collection development policies that define what kinds of material will and won't be published) and external agreements with customers (e.g., memoranda of understanding or service-level agreements for particular publishing projects).

Participants in the workshops agreed that formal agreements with “customers” (e.g., faculty editors of journals, authors of monographs) helped manage expectations and facilitated standardized and sustainable services. There was preference for terming these “service level agreements” rather than using the more formal and familiar format of a “memorandum of understanding.” This emphasized the responsibilities of the library rather than the role of the customer. However it is named, participants in the workshops agreed that some kind of formal documentation advances product quality and enhances the sustainability of publishing services over the longer term.

Participants also agreed that a central site for sharing policies, SLAs, MOUs, and workflow documents would help with community building and the sharing of best practices. Some institutions share these documents on their own, but a great number do not. There was discussion about whether the SPARC Campus-based Publishing Resource Center might be the best place for this, <http://www.arl.org/sparc/partnering/>.

Drawing on the results of research, recommendations from the report in the area of policies and processes focused on establishing editorial quality and performance criteria to increase the value and longevity of the publications that library programs support, and creating a shared repository of policies, tools, and templates to improve and accelerate adherence to best practices and encourage community sharing and participation.

Sustainability Best Practices

As library publishing services mature, issues of sustainability come to the fore. The larger programs, those with 5 to 16 FTE, have been around for over 8 years now. They are realizing that it is harder to keep a program going now the initial exuberance is over. The survey provided some helpful information around sustainability challenges: The vast majority of library publishing programs (almost 90%) were launched in order to contribute to change in the scholarly publishing system, supplemented by a variety of other mission-related motivations. The prevalence of mission-driven rationale aligns with the funding sources reported for library publishing programs, including library budget reallocations

(97%), temporary funding from the institution (67%), and grant support (57%). However, many respondents expect a greater percentage of future publishing program funding to come from service fees, product revenue, charge-backs, royalties, and other program-generated income. The perceived relevance of publishing services to the library’s mission, and the integration of such services into the library’s budget, helps explain the relative lack of emphasis on sustainability planning. Few institutions (15%) have a documented sustainability plan for their publishing services, and only a fifth have evaluated the value or effectiveness of their publishing services.

In this context, a particular area of focus of the project was on exploring sustainability issues. Three sustainability case studies conducted by consultant Raym Crow explored in some depth the challenges being faced at the three partner libraries with expanding or maintaining their programs; Purdue with e-journals, Georgia Tech with conference proceedings, and Utah with monographic publications. The report contains a “sustainability model” tool that challenges libraries to think about audience segments, the value proposition of a publishing program, its core activities and resources, distribution channels, and income streams.

A common theme was the need to clearly articulate the costs of different programs, which are often hidden within library operating budgets. Profit and loss statements are relevant as much for Open Access publications as for subscription-based ones. As Raym Crow noted, there is no antithesis between such business-like tools and mission-related activities. As in all well-run non-profits, accounting best practices are a way of achieving mission.

Methods of maintaining Open Access publications are still various. “Author pays” is an unpopular method in the library publishing services community, with sponsorship models most prevalent where charges are made at all. As the larger programs such as at the University of Pittsburgh or Simon Fraser University gather stables of publications, opportunities develop for list-based rather than title-based revenue approaches. An interesting example of this sort of “product mix” can be found in Columbia University’s Center for Digital

Research and Scholarship (CDRS), where “premier” titles can include a surplus that supports free offers of “barebones” services.^{viii}

Library publishing services need to articulate their mission, and then show clearly how they are achieving it. At Villanova University, for example, the mission goes beyond providing services on campus to advancing “the Augustinian Catholic mission of the university, building on our academic program strengths (e.g. Nursing, Engineering) and library collection strengths (e.g. Irish Studies),” according to Stephen Spatz, Assistant Outreach and Research Librarian. The more clearly articulated the mission, the more effectively success can be demonstrated. Paul Royster at the University of Nebraska has been particularly inventive in finding ways to show how library publishing services advance the university, making particularly good use of the ability of Google Analytics to show usage at a State as well as national and international level.

The report’s recommendations are to promote sustainability best practices to improve the long-term strength and stability of library publishing programs; share service models and revenue approaches to increase library publishing program funding options and facilitate the efficient implementation of successful programs; and develop return-on-investment justifications for funding library publishing programs to support increased library budget allocations in support of such programs.

Organization and Collaboration

Several questions in the survey explored how library publishing services were organized and the extent to which these collaborated with other publishing operations, especially university presses. An increasing number of libraries have partnered with small societies to publish their journals. As suggested in a recent ARL report by October Ivins and Judy Luther on the “journals rescue project,” li-

braries may have an important role in helping small journals, mainly in the humanities, survive.^{ix}

While previous reports have emphasized the potential for university presses and libraries to collaborate on campus initiatives, the survey shows that fewer than half the active library publishing programs that are in a position to collaborate with a university press, for example due to being on the same campus, actually do so.^x Even those that do tend to limit their collaborations to activities such as the digitization of university press backlists that are not particularly strategic in nature. Workshop participants suggested several reasons for this lack of collaboration, ranging from the different funding models libraries and presses operated under (subsidy for libraries, majority cost-recovery for most presses) to a simple lack of understanding within libraries about the capabilities of university presses, which are increasingly well geared to the digital environment.^{xi} Promoting collaborations and partnerships to leverage resources within campuses, across institutions, and between university presses, scholarly societies, and other partners, is one the main recommendations of the report.

Concluding Comments

As academic libraries transform themselves from being collectors of content to providers of services, their role as publishers is worthy of close scrutiny. While the original goals of investments in library-based publishing (to contribute to a major change in the scholarly communication system) may not yet have been achieved, the report provides clear evidence of growing sophistication and stability. At a campus level, libraries are providing solutions for scholars who are working in new ways in the digital environment. At a larger scale, moves toward multi-library publishing collaborations, such as those achieved in Canada through the Synergies project, were discernible during workshop presentations and may yet achieve some of the grander goals originally outlined.

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ings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

ⁱⁱ The PIs on the grant were James L. Mullins, Purdue University; Joyce L. Ogburn, University of Utah; and Catherine Murray-Rust, Georgia Institute of Technology. The key staff members were: Julie Speer, Sarah Fuchs, and Bill Anderson (Georgia Tech); Charles Watkinson and Mark Newton (Purdue); Daureen Nesdill and Allyson Mower (Utah). Raym Crow and October Ivins were the main consultants to the project.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hahn, K. L. (2008) *Research Library Publishing Services: New Options for University Publishing*, Association of Research Libraries: <http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/research-library-publishing-services.pdf>

^{iv} <http://pkp.sfu.ca/>

^v <http://www.library.gatech.edu/scds/conferences.php>

^{vi} <http://digitalcommons.bepress.com/>

^{vii} <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jate/>

^{viii} <http://cdrs.columbia.edu/cdrsmain/texture-publications/which-service-level-is-right-for-my-journal/>

^{ix} Luther, J. and Ivins, O. (2011) *Publishing Support for Small Print-Based Publishers: Options for ARL Libraries*, Association of Research Libraries. http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/pub-support_7mar11.pdf

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